

The Change from Traditional Nobleman to Modern Bureaucrat in Thailand: A Case Study of the Saeng-Xuto Family

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タイにおける伝統的貴族官僚から現代官僚への変容
— セーン・シュートー・ファミリーの事例 —

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Abstract

The pre-modern state of Siam consisted of traditional bureaucracy and a decentralized political system without territorial boundaries. King Chulalongkorn began to reform the old bureaucracy by managing revenues in 1873 and founding the State and Privy Councils in 1874. The King reformed the central administration into twelve ministries of the modern bureaucracy in 1892. Previous academic works about the creation of modern state focused on the causes of reformation, processes of reforms and problems after the reforms. Those works analyzed the policies, the structure of state modernization, and the difficulties of reformation. This article aims to examine the reformation's effects on Siamese noblemen during the creation of modern state. The modern bureaucracy reorganized the royal court, including the government's budget and tax collection. The nobles in the traditional bureaucracy had major duties in the manpower control and tax collection and earned the economic benefits from their duties, as opposed to officials in the modern bureaucracy who were professional and only paid salaries. This article examines how noble families in the Bangkok period adapted to be bureaucrats. The case study focuses on the Saeng-Xuto family, which ascended during the reign of King Rama I. The study examines two generations of the Saeng-Xuto family. The first generation is Praya Surasakmontri (Saeng Saeng-Xuto), who served King Chulalongkorn before the 1892 reformation. The second generation is the sons of Praya Surasakmontri, including Cherm, Klin, Yam, Khem and Chang. They progressed rapidly in the modern bureaucracy. The historical evidences used in this article are funeral books, the biographical books of Chao Praya Surasakmontri and the authoritative sources in the National Archive of Thailand. The result of this article is to emphasize the Saeng-Xuto family's success in adapting themselves to the modern bureaucracy due to their professionalism and their loyalty to the kings.

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1. Introduction

The pre-modern Siamese government was organized around regulating people rather than the control of land and money. In the pre-modern context, land was abundant and labor was scarce; people were thus the most valuable resource.¹ Siamese kings exercised authoritative control by promoting the growth of informal clientage arrangements.² By doing this, kings' political power was decentralized. Frustrated by the decline of their political powers, Siamese kings introduced new policies to increase their control over local officials.³ The literature on pre-modern Siamese government highlights its inefficiencies and lack of control over provincial centers of power.⁴ King Chulalongkorn was frustrated with these inefficiencies, and as a result, decided to reform Siam into a modern state based on the colonial European model.⁵ He ameliorated revenues and tax collection, abolished slavery and the corvée labor system, reformed central administration into the modern bureaucracy by segregating it into twelve ministries, established a modern military, and developed transportation in Siam.

Previous works on the modern bureaucracy in the Fifth Reign focused on the structure of state modernization, policies of each ministry, and roles of ministers. This previous literature can possibly be categorized into three separate groups. The first group analyzed the creation and achievements of the modern bureaucracy in the Fifth Reign. Siam could maintain its independence from the threat of European colonization thanks to the successful reforms of its government and administration. For instance, Bunnag focused on the centralized system of provincial administration under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, the Minister of Interior, from 1892 to 1915.⁶ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab succeeded in laying the foundation for a centralized system of provincial administration.⁷ The second group examined the emergence of Siam as a modern nation state in the twentieth century. For example, Mead proposed Siam's transformation from a traditional state into a centralized one in the Fifth Reign.⁸ After having signed the Bowring Treaty in 1855, Siam was integrated into the world economy. King Chulalongkorn reformed Siam not only to save its independence, but also to diminish the political power of the mighty nobility in the royal court.⁹ Mead argued that the modern bureaucracy in the Fifth Reign required an increase in the number of educated bureaucrats to work in each ministry.¹⁰ Lastly, the third group examined the administration of each ministry and the

¹ Anchalee Susayanha, "Changes of the Phrai System and Their Effects on Thai Society in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn," MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981, 30-31.

² Akin Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873*, (Bangkok: Kobfai Publishing, 2017), 147-154.

³ Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society*, 180-181.

⁴ H.G. Quaritch Wales, *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration*, (New York: Paragon, 1965), 1-2.

⁵ King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) (1853-1910, r.1868-1910) was the fifth monarch of Siam under the House of Chakkri. His reign was marked by social reforms, the modernization of Siam, and territorial concessions to Britain and France.

⁶ Tej Bunnag, "The Provincial Administration of Siam from 1892 to 1915," Dissertation, Oxford University, 1969.

⁷ Bunnag, "The Provincial Administration of Siam," 8-10.

⁸ Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004).

⁹ Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 20-21.

¹⁰ Mead, *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*, 23-25.

problems faced during reformation. For instance, Bunnag stated that competing with limited resources during the initial phase of the Reforms' Period (1892-1910) led to conflicts among ministers.¹¹ The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense were allocated most of the government's budget, and thus could recruit more competent officials than other ministries.¹² These three groups show the effects that the modern bureaucracy had on changing Siam into a modern state. Meanwhile, the elites had to adapt themselves to the modern bureaucracy as their political power and economic benefits declined. However, these previous studies rarely mentioned how noblemen during the Reforms' Period adapted themselves to the modern bureaucracy.

This article examines how the Saeng-Xuto family successfully adapted themselves in the Bangkok period in order to demonstrate how noblemen can effectively become bureaucrats in the modern bureaucracy during the reformation. The Saeng-Xuto family was selected to be a case study because its members progressed rapidly after the 1892 reformation with regard to their careers and social statuses.¹³ In contrast, the roles of the Bunnag family, which had been the kingmakers of the Fourth and the Fifth Reigns in the Bangkok period, gradually declined in the royal court after the passing of Si Suriyawongse, the regent of Siam in the Fifth Reign and the leader of the Bunangs, in 1885.¹⁴

Previous academic works about the Saeng-Xuto family place more emphasis on the roles of Chao Praya Surasakmontri (Cherm Saeng-Xuto) than his family's roles. Aeawsriwong argued that Chamean Waiworranart (Cherm Saeng-Xuto), as a general, served an important role in suppressing the Haws' groups in Luang Prabang, which was the vassal state of Siam, from 1885 to 1888.¹⁵ He deployed modern weapons such as cannons and explosives and formulated strategies to overcome the Haws.¹⁶ Similarly, Suratanakavikul focused on the work of the nine Ministers of Agriculture before the 1932 revolution, especially the role of Chao Praya Surasakmontri as the first Minister of Agriculture after the 1892 reformation. Her work discussed his responsibility and administration as the Minister of Agriculture, e.g., the revision of the Farm Tax Act, Mining Act, and rice field disputes at Rangsit Canal.¹⁷ Rattanasampant's work focused on Chao Praya Surasakmontri's role as an entrepreneur, from 1885 to 1931.¹⁸ Although Rattanasampant's work had a different focus than others, it is evident that most previous studies were about Chao Praya Surasakmontri.

While previous academic works focused on Chao Praya Surasakmontri's various roles in bureaucracy

¹¹ Piyanart Bunnag, "Politics among Governmental Organization: A Case Study of Major Conflicts among Ministries during The Reforms'Period (1892-1910)," Dissertation, Chulalongkorn University, 1990.

¹² Bunnag, Politics among Governmental Organization, 16-17.

¹³ The surname of Saeng-Xuto was named by King Vajiravudh.

¹⁴ David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reforms in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn*, (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 43-45.

¹⁵ Nithi Aeawsriwong, "Suppression of the Haws Uprisings and Loss of Thai Territories in 1888," MA thesis, Chulalongkorn Univeristy, 1966.

¹⁶ Aeawsriwong, "Suppression of the Haws Uprisings," 55-60.

¹⁷ Phuangphet Suratanakavikul, "A Comparison of the Work of the Ministers of Agriculture from 1892-1932," MA thesis, Chulalongkorn Univeristy, 1973.

¹⁸ Lagsamee Rattasampant, "Field Marshal Chao Phya Surasakmontri and His Business Enterprise 1885-1931," MA thesis, Chulalongkorn Univeristy, 1981.

and business, this article shows that apart from Chao Praya Surasakmontri, who managed to occupy an important role in the modern bureaucracy, other members of his family likewise succeeded in adjusting themselves to work in the modern bureaucracy and aid in the transition of Siam into a modern state.

Unlike those of previous works, this article also refers to the private letters found in the National Archives of Thailand and the funeral books of the members of the Saeng-Xuto family.¹⁹ Furthermore, this article refers to the funeral book of Chao Praya Surasakmontri published in 1933²⁰ and The Autobiography of Field Marshal Chao Praya Surasakmontri Vols. 1-3 published by Kurusapa publishing company in 1971.²¹ Chao Praya Surasakmontri's autobiography contains his family background, an account of his accomplishments, and a record of his time with the Sri Racha Limited Company.

The thesis of this article argues that the Saeng-Xuto family's successful adaptation to the modern bureaucracy was due to their professionalism and loyalty to the monarch. It also argues that the Saeng-Xutos strongly believed in the patron-client relationship, in which subordinates expressed a debt of gratitude to their masters in return for being fostered by their masters²². The scope of this article falls within the reigns of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) and King Vajiravudh (1910-1925).

This article is divided into four parts: the introduction, the rise of the Saeng-Xuto family in the royal court, the adaptation of the Saeng-Xuto family in the modern bureaucracy, and the conclusion.

2. The Rise of the Saeng-Xuto Family in the Royal Court

This part discusses how the Saeng-Xuto family prospered in the royal court. It provides background information on the Saeng-Xuto family and the dynamic of political power at the time. Then, it demonstrates how Praya Surasakmontri (Saeng) changed political sides to be with King Chulalongkorn. It also discusses how Saeng utilized the patron-client relationship, focusing on the loyalty to the monarch to aid the rise of his family.

In the traditional bureaucracy, the Siamese elites were selected from the royal family and noble families such as the Bunnags, Xutos, Singhasenis, Kanlayanamits and Amatayakuls. These noble families served the kings in the Bangkok period for many generations. They presented their sons to the kings as royal pages and daughters as concubines. Also, of note, most noblemen married daughters of other noble families. Inter-marriages strengthened the patron-client relationship in the traditional bureaucracy. Kings recruited officials who came from noble families. Between the Third and Fifth Reigns, the Bunnag family became the most powerful noble family and ruled many important positions in the royal court. As a result, the members of the Bunnag family were

¹⁹ Funeral book is mostly accumulated by the relatives of the dead person. Its detail contains biography, working experiences, memory and the family tree of the dead person. In Thai society, a funeral book is distributed to people attending the funeral.

²⁰ Chao Praya Surasakmontri, *The Funeral Book of the Autobiography of Field Marshal Chao Praya Surasakmontri*, (n.p., 1933).

²¹ Chao Praya Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography of Field Marshal Chao Praya Surasakmontri*, Vols. 1-3, (Pra Nakorn: Kurusapa publishing company, 1962).

²² Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society*, 101-110.

kingmakers of the Fourth and Fifth Reigns.

In 1868, a young King Chulalongkorn was elevated to the throne by high-ranking noblemen headed by Chao Praya Si Suriyawongse, the regent of Siam and leader of the Bunnags.²³ For the office of Front Palace, Si Suriyawongse selected Prince Wichaichan, the eldest son of Vice King Pinklao, despite the fact that the Front Palace should traditionally be appointed by the current king.²⁴ The young king contemplated his limited powers, as shown in his letter to Crown Prince Maha Vachiroonahit in 1893, and he described feeling like a headless person with his body being propped up as puppet king, surrounded by enemies whose intentions were openly bared around him, both in the capital and abroad.²⁵ King Chulalongkorn organized a plan to centralize his political power. After his second coronation in 1873, he initiated the reformation of Siam by implementing financial and political reforms in 1873 and 1874. These reforms diminished the political power of the mighty noblemen and certain royal family members. As a result, there were three political groups in the royal court: Young Siam, Conservative Siam, and Old Siam.²⁶ King Chulalongkorn was the head of Young Siam, which aimed to reform Siam into a modern state. Si Suriyawongse, the head of Old Siam, and Prince Wichaichan, the head of Conservative Siam, lost power under the king's reforms.

In the royal court, the King promoted noblemen in his group or those who supported reformation in order to balance the Bunnags' political powers.²⁷ Saeng, the progenitor of the Saeng-Xuto family, was the first royal page of King Chulalongkorn, and one of the noblemen to cut ties with Old Siam and supported Chulalongkorn's reformation.²⁸ Although Saeng married Lady Doem Bunnag and related to the Bunnag family, he chose to be loyal to King Chulalongkorn.²⁹ He also presented his sons, Chan and Cherm, to serve the King as royal pages.³⁰ He also had ten children with his six other wives. Those children were sons, Klin, Yam, Khem and Chang, who were sent to be royal pages, and daughters, Yuan, Duang, and Lin, who were sent to serve in the royal court. Yuan later became a concubine for King Chulalongkorn.³¹

Saeng's decision provoked the Bunnag family. Cherm later wrote that certain relatives of the

²³ Si Suriyawongse was the regent of Siam from 1868 to 1873. He was commander of the royal palace navy and chancellor of the Defense in the reign of King Rama IV.

²⁴ Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand*, 43.

²⁵ King Chulalongkorn, *Phraborommarachawat nai ratchakarn thi 5*, (Pra Nakorn: Pra Chan Press, 1957), 20-21.

²⁶ Chulalongkorn, *Phraborommarachawat nai ratchakarn thi 5*, 44.

²⁷ Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand*, 45.

²⁸ The Saeng-Xuto came from the Bang Chang family, descending from Queen Amarindra of King Rama I. Xuto was the older brother of Queen Amarindra, and the progenitor of three noble families: the Xutos, the Sawat-Xutos and the Saeng-Xutos. Xuto was married to Thongdee. One of their children was Muang, who married Praya Sombathiban (Suea) and had seven children. The sixth son was Sawat, the ancestor of Sawat-Xuto family, who married Lady Piam Bunnag, the daughter of Somdet Chao Praya Barommaha Prayurawongse (Dit Bunnag). The second son of Sawat and Piam named Saeng was the ancestor of the Saeng-Xutos.

²⁹ Doem Bunnag was daughters of Pra Suriyapakdee (Sanit Bunnag) and was the beloved grandchildren of Somdet Chao Praya Barommaha Pichaiyart (Tat Bunnag). She had eleven children with Saeng, of which seven were deceased, leaving only two sons and two daughters.

³⁰ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 633.

³¹ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 634-642.

Bunnag family resented his family. Later, King Chulalongkorn granted a house in the Saladaeng area of Bangkok and money to buy the surrounding land to the Saeng-Xuto family.³² Chulalongkorn favored Saeng by granting him the title of Praya Surasakmontri, Lieutenant Colonel, in charge of the Director of the Corps of Royal Pages, which was the personal army of King Chulalongkorn. To show his loyalty to the King, Praya Surasakmontri presented his son Cherm as the first soldier to serve in the Corps of Royal Pages. When Chulalongkorn visited Singapore, Java, and India in 1871 and 1872, he selected nobles and royal family members to accompany him and observe the Western influences on the above-mentioned colonized land. Both Praya Surasakmontri and Cherm were among those selected.³³

After the trip, Praya Surasakmontri fell ill and nearly died in 1873. King Chulalongkorn visited him at home, and Praya Surasakmontri proclaimed to the King as follows:

I will die soon, and I offer my two sons, Luang Aungka (Chan) and Luang Sanyut (Cherm), whom His Majesty has been fostering, to my lord of life ... If His Majesty ordered Cherm in dangerous tasks, he would sacrifice his life for His Majesty. However, both of my sons are honest. They will represent me after I pass away in order to serve His Majesty with loyalty.³⁴

The statements above show the relationship between lord and subordinate in the patron-client relationship. Loyalty would be the key characteristic of the Saeng-Xuto family members. The Saeng-Xutos rose from a minor noble family shadowing the Bunnags to become a strong noble family in the royal court. Saeng cleverly adapted himself by becoming a part of Chulalongkorn's political group. His sons later adapted themselves to survive in the modern bureaucracy.

3. The Adaptation of the Saeng-Xuto Family in the Modern Bureaucracy

This part discusses how Chao Praya Surasakmontri and other members of the Saeng-Xuto family adapt to changes in the modern bureaucracy. It examines the roles which Chao Praya Surasakmontri played and then introduces the background of his half-brothers. It discusses why they progressed in the modern bureaucracy. Furthermore, it examines how Chao Praya Surasakmontri adapted himself to be an entrepreneur in an effort to balance the declining economic benefits caused by the reformation and how he used the patron-client relationship to support his company.

3.1 The Roles of Chao Praya Surasakmontri (Cherm) in the Modern Bureaucracy

Cherm grew up in the old bureaucracy. He was primarily educated at the Prayurawongsawat temple of the Bunnag family. Here, he developed his Thai language and mathematical skills.³⁵ He

³² Surasakmontri, *The Funeral Book*, 10-12.

³³ Sachchidanand Sahai, *India in 1872: As Seen by the Siamese*, (Seaside: BR Publishing Corporation, 2002), 42-47.

³⁴ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 40-41.

³⁵ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 45.

was later sent to the house of Si Suriyawongse, where he practiced statecrafts. At the age of eighteen, he was promoted to Luang Sanyut under his father's regiment.³⁶ However, the turning point of his career was the death of his father, Praya Surasakmontri. He considered himself a man without family because no individual, not even his relatives, protected him after his father had withdrawn his support from the Bunnags.³⁷ King Chulalongkorn decided to foster his family because of his father's honesty.³⁸

The fatherless young man was aware of his gratitude for King Chulalongkorn's kindness and patronage of the Saeng-Xutos. Sponsored by the King, Cherm ordained as a monk at the Royal Temple of the Emerald Buddha; his marriage proposal to Rai Bunnag was also made by the King.³⁹ Later, Cherm joined Young Siam. He was one of six nobles, along with Chulalongkorn's younger brothers, whose oath sworn in front of the Emerald Buddha pleaded allegiance to no other successors of King Chulalongkorn except the Crown Prince.⁴⁰ These swearers were young elites, loyal to the king and determined to reform Siam.

In 1880, Cherm was appointed to Chamean Waiworranart, the Commander-in-Chief of the Front Foot Guard. He was one of the key persons in developing the Siamese military into Western styles. Initially, he recruited men to be volunteer soldiers in the Front Foot Guard. Only few men wanted to be soldiers due to their fear of death at war. He sought to recruit freemen, who were Khmer and Laotian, from the provinces of Ratchaburi and Phetchaburi. However, both provinces are Bunnags' area of influence, especially Ratchaburi where Si Suriyawongse, a former regent, lived in semi-retirement.⁴¹ To counter Si Suriyawongse's protest against the recruitment, King Chulalongkorn explained that the recruited were freemen.⁴² To develop the recruited men into well-trained soldiers, Cherm commissioned Italian officers to train them.⁴³ He also proposed a plan to build the office of the Front Foot Guard to King Chulalongkorn and was the first nobleman to use electricity, which was powered by his personal generator, in the office of the Front Foot Guard.⁴⁴

After the deaths of Si Suriyawongse in 1883 and Prince Wichaichan in 1885, political conflicts between the three political parties ceased. King Chulalongkorn enjoyed supreme powers and continued to reform Siam. Cherm was sent to suppress the Haws, who had been robbing and killing people in Luang Prabang, a Laos vassal state of Siam in 1885 and in 1888.⁴⁵ This was the first time that Siam sent a troop of well-trained soldiers from the Front Foot Guard and deployed modern

³⁶ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 46.

³⁷ Noel Alfres Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868-1910: Politics and Military Reform during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn," Dissertation, Cornell University, 1974, 218.

³⁸ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam," 218.

³⁹ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 45-46.

⁴⁰ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam," 220-221.

⁴¹ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam," 229-230.

⁴² Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam," 231.

⁴³ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 50.

⁴⁴ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 52.

⁴⁵ Luang Prabang is located in northern Laos. It used to be the capital of the kingdom of Luang Prabang.

weapons such as bombs, cannons and guns.⁴⁶ King Chulalongkorn was pleased with Cherm's work, and he was promoted to Praya Surasakmontri, the same title and name conferred to his father.

The central administration of Siam was reformed into twelve ministries in 1892. Ten ministers were King Chulalongkorn's brothers with only two being noblemen. Praya Surasakmontri (Cherm) was selected to be Minister of Agriculture. Despite his lack of agricultural experience, King Chulalongkorn chose him for his loyalty and seniority.⁴⁷ He was later conferred Chao Praya Surasakmontri.⁴⁸ As Minister of Agriculture from 1892 to 1896, he reorganized the ministry into different departments, hired foreign officials to make maps and work in the Department of Mineral Survey, and managed the Rangsit Canal disputes.⁴⁹

Chao Praya Surasakmontri progressed rapidly in political rank and social status because King Chulalongkorn trusted his loyalty and appreciated his military accomplishments. His progression made the Saeng-Xuto family stand out among other noble families.

3.2 The Saeng-Xuto Family's Adaptation After the 1892 Reforms

To support King Chulalongkorn's effort to reform Siam, Cherm encouraged his half-brothers to study abroad as royal students before the Siamese reforms in 1892. These selected royal students had to be intelligent, and from noble families. Klin and Yam were of the second group of royal students educated in Europe in the Fifth Reign.⁵⁰ Cherm then sent Chang and Khem to receive their education in England. King Chulalongkorn later granted them scholarships.⁵¹ After returning from overseas, Klin, Yam, Chang, and Khem were considered the nobility with the potential to help develop Siam into a modern state.

Klin Saeng-Xuto attended the School of the Royal Palace, where the descendants of the royal family and the nobility were educated. After Klin graduated, he was selected to be the second group of royal students to be granted a king's scholarship to study in Europe.⁵² He trained with the army in Austria and rose to the rank of Second Lieutenant. In 1892, he came back to Siam and was granted the title of Captain Luang Sanyut. He was a Cavalry Commander in Bangkok. In 1893, he became a military attaché to Germany because of his fluency in German. He was a royal page of Prince Chira, who was part of the military in Denmark from 1891 to 1897.⁵³ He was promoted to Praya Ramkamheng in 1903. When he returned to Siam, he was sent to subdue the Ngew rebels in the

⁴⁶ Battye, "The Military, Government and Society in Siam," 250-253.

⁴⁷ Suratanakavikul, "A Comparison of the Work of the Ministers of Agriculture," 45-47.

⁴⁸ Surasakmontri, *The Autobiography*, 103-105.

⁴⁹ Suratanakavikul, "A Comparison of the Work of the Ministers of Agriculture," 47.

⁵⁰ La-Othong Ammarinrat, "The Sending of Students Abroad from 1868-1937," MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1979, 25-28.

⁵¹ Anake Navitkamul, *Siamese Nobility*, (Bangkok: Saeng-Dao Publishing, 2006), 132-133.

⁵² Ammarinrat, "The Sending of Students Abroad," 45.

⁵³ Field Marshal Prince Chira or Prince of Nakhon Chaisi was the seventeenth son of King Chulalongkorn. He was the commander of the department of military operation (1901-1910) and Minister of Defense (1910-1913). He is now considered the Father of Thai Army.

northwest region of Thailand.⁵⁴ In 1904, he became a commander of the first division in Bangkok. In 1907, he was conferred the title of Major General Praya Surasena.⁵⁵

Klin's career progressed rapidly in the modern bureaucracy because he graduated from Austria's military while the Royal Thai Army was being developed. In addition, he was a royal page of Prince Chira, who played many important roles in establishing the Royal Thai Army and was later promoted to Minister of Defense in the Sixth Reign. Prince Chira selected him to command the cavalry in Bangkok.

He suffered from oral cancer and had to resign from the bureaucracy in 1915. Because of his loyalty, King Vajiravudh presented him with a pension and land on Dinsor Road.

Yam Saeng-Xuto was selected to be a royal student to study in mineralogy in France. When the Department of Minerals was founded in 1891, and most officials were foreigners; he was the first Thai official in the Department of Minerals.⁵⁶ Afterwards, he was under the command of Chao Praya Surasakmontri, the Minister of Agriculture, from 1892 to 1896.⁵⁷ Archival evidence shows that he wrote a report to Chao Praya Surasakmontri. He and foreign official, Hable Smile surveyed mineral sources in Nan, Sai, Chiang Khong, and Pichai.⁵⁸

During the reforms, Yam's career advanced rapidly in the modern bureaucracy. In 1909, he was promoted to Praya Barombath, the Director of the Land Registration Department.⁵⁹ He later became Praya Prachacheeboriban, the Director of Mineral Resources Department, from 1910 to 1914 under the reign of King Vajiravudh.

Chang Saeng-Xuto was presented by Chamean Waiworranart (Cherm) as a royal page of Prince Vajiravudh, the Crown Prince of Siam. It is very likely that Cherm requested King Chulalongkorn that Chang be sent to receive education in England.⁶⁰ He graduated from the British Navy School in Southampton in 1887.⁶¹ From 1888 to 1893 he worked in the Royal British Navy. In 1897, he returned Siam to serve in the Royal Thai Navy. In 1900, he was promoted to Luang Pradityatnawayut. In 1904, he was conferred the title of Pra Pradityatnawayut. In 1906, he was granted the title of Praya Ratchawangsan, and he was promoted to Admiral Praya Mahayotha in 1912.⁶²

In the modern bureaucracy, the king should not interfere with the affairs of ministries.⁶³ However, King Vajiravudh attempted to influence military affairs through his loyal subordinates.⁶⁴ As a royal

⁵⁴ Somdet Krom Praya Damrongrajanupab, *Kondee thi kapachao rujak*, (Bangkok: Chomrom Damrong Vittaya, 1983), 65-66.

⁵⁵ Somdet Krom Praya Damrongrajanupab, *Kondee thi kapachao rujak*, 67.

⁵⁶ Ammarinrat, "The Sending of Students Abroad," 54.

⁵⁷ *Funeral Book of Praya Mahayotha (Chang Saeng-Xuto)*, (Bangkok: Ayothaya Publishing, 1946).

⁵⁸ N.A.5 Kaset 6.1/5 Yam, as a royal page, surveyed mineral resources in the northern towns. (5 March 111- 17 June R.S.112).

⁵⁹ Ministry of Agriculture, *History of Ministry of Agriculture*, (Pra Nakorn: Rung Reangtham Publishing, 1957).

⁶⁰ *Funeral Book of Praya Mahayotha*, 5.

⁶¹ *Funeral Book of Praya Mahayotha*, 5.

⁶² *Funeral Book of Praya Mahayotha*, 5.

⁶³ Chaianan Samuttavanit, *100 Years of the Reformation: The Evolution of the State Power and Political Power*, (Bangkok: The Institute of Educational Policy, 1998), 63.

⁶⁴ Thep Boontanon, *The Politics in the Thai Army in the Reign of King Vajiravudh*, (Bangkok: Matichon Press, 2016), 35-37.

page of Prince Vajiravudh who had served him in England, Chang became King Vajiravudh's loyal subordinate.⁶⁵ He reported to King Vajiravudh internal problems of the Royal Navy, which was under the command of Prince Nakornsawan.⁶⁶ Accordingly, Prince Nakornsawan wished to discharge him on the grounds that he insulted his subordinates, defamed his commanders, and permitted outsiders to vend merchandise to the Royal Navy without his commanders' approval. In addition, some of his colleagues detested him.⁶⁷ However, King Vajiravudh protected him from the discharge and commanded him to state his apology to Prince Nakornsawan for his misconduct in a royal letter. In fact, he should have been punished more seriously by King Vajiravudh because he disrespected Prince Nakornsawan. Nevertheless, King Vajiravudh promoted him to be the Chief of the Royal Navy in the military.

Cherm presented Khem Saeng-Xuto as a royal page of Prince Vajiravudh and asked King Chulalongkorn to have him study in England. Khem attended an engineering school at Trinity College. He then furthered his study in the field of post and telegraph in London.⁶⁸ He worked at the Department of Telegraph, Radio Receivers and Telephone at the Train Midland Company for four years before he returned to Siam and worked at the Department of Telegraph in 1894. His work was to install telegraph lines in northern Siam from Chiang Mai, Prae, Nan to Luang Prabang and in eastern Siam through Battambang and Siem Reap.⁶⁹ After his mission was completed, King Chulalongkorn conferred him the title of Luang Thoralek, the Head of Department of Telegraph in 1897.⁷⁰ He divided the department into many sections, including accounting and maintenance, with its own central office.⁷¹ In 1906, he was promoted to Pra Thoralek. After the reign of King Chulalongkorn, he still excelled as he was conferred to Praya Anutootwatee in the reign of King Vajiravudh. In 1911, he installed telegraph lines in the royal palace. When King Vajiravudh initiated the Wild Tiger Corps, Khem was an engineer in the Department of Telegraph in the Wild Tiger Corps.⁷² He had the honor of being a privy councilor in the reigns of King Vajiravudh and King Prachadhipok (Rama VII).⁷³

Evidently, the half-brothers of Chao Praya Surasakmontri successfully worked in the modern bureaucracy and achieved high-ranking offices in the Sixth Reign because they were professional amid the modernization of Siam and maintained their loyal relationship with the monarch.

⁶⁵ *Funeral Book of Praya Mahayotha*, 5.

⁶⁶ Prince Nakornsawan or Marshal- Admiral Paribatra Sukhumbanthu was the thirteenth son of King Chulalongkorn. He was an influential Thai military officer in the early twentieth century. He was the Minister of the Royal Navy from 1910 to 1920. He was the Minister of Defense from 1926-1928.

⁶⁷ N.A.6 K.21.1/22 Prince Nakornsawan quarreled with Praya Mahayotha (Chang) (April 12, 1913).

⁶⁸ Anake Navitkamul, *Siamese Nobility*, (Bangkok: Saeng-Dao Publishing, 2006), 136.

⁶⁹ Battambang and Siem Reap were the cities under Siamese administration from 1795 until 1907. They are provinces in northwestern Cambodia.

⁷⁰ Navitkamul, *Siamese Nobility*, 146.

⁷¹ Navitkamul, *Siamese Nobility*, 146.

⁷² Navitkamul, *Siamese Nobility*, 147.

⁷³ Navitkamul, *Siamese Nobility*, 148.

3.3 The Saeng-Xuto Family in Business

After Siam and England signed the Bowring Treaty in 1855, foreign trade became free and multilateral. Westerners invested in rice, teak, and mining in the country.⁷⁴ From 1873 to 1875, King Chulalongkorn reformed government finance to collect and centralize the state's wealth. The King separated his personal properties from the state, and the Privy Purse was formed to manage the private fortunes of the King and invest in various businesses.⁷⁵ Certain elites depended upon the financial support from the Privy Purse in their business, and the Privy Purse held some shares in their business.⁷⁶

One of the nobles who rapidly adapted himself to become an entrepreneur in the Fifth Reign was Chao Praya Surasakmontri. He initiated a real estate business; he constructed roads, including Pra Muan Road and Surasak Road in Silom district.⁷⁷ He also sold pieces of land along those roads.⁷⁸ With his experience as the Minister of Agriculture and help of Praya Prachacheep (Yam), he invested in the mining business. Archival evidence shows that after he had resigned from the bureaucracy, he sought Prince Rapee, the Minister of Agriculture, for permission to smelt molybdenite in Takienthong district and Makhnam district in Chantaburi province in 1919.⁷⁹

Since Cherm was the Minister of Agriculture, he had been interested in the timber business. However, due to an illness, he retreated to the Sri Racha district, where he surveyed forests.⁸⁰ Since most teak businesses were invested in and owned by westerners, he wished to establish a saw mill and timber business managed by the Siamese.

After Cherm's resignation in 1896, King Chulalongkorn permitted him to operate a timber business in the Sri Racha district for five years, a term which was later extended.⁸¹ When Cherm founded his business, he struggled with the management and financial aspects. Due to his long-running loyalty to the King, Chulalongkorn decided to help him further by permitting the Privy Purse to invest partially in the Sri Racha Limited Company, which was later registered in September 1908.⁸² The registered capital was 1,500,000 baht and divided into 15,000 shares.⁸³ The shareholders were royals, nobles and the members of Saeng-Xuto family; they included Queen Saowapa, Concubine Prae, Lady Liam Surasak (wife of Cherm), Praya Surasena (Klin), Praya Barommabat

⁷⁴ Chira Charoenlort, *The Evolution of Thailand's Economy*, (Bangkok: Thai Wattana Panich Press, 1971), 10.

⁷⁵ Chonlada Wattanasiri, "Investment of the Privy Purse, 1890-1932," MA thesis, Silpakorn University, 1986, 22-23.

⁷⁶ Wattanasiri, "Investment of the Privy Purse," 30-33.

⁷⁷ Silom area is a center of business and trading in Bangkok. In the Fifth Reign, there were many foreign residences and embassies in Silom area.

⁷⁸ N.A. Mahatthai 8.1/39 Chao Praya Surasakmontri wanted to sell the lands in the Saladaeng sub-district and Hua Lampong sub-district. (11 November 1896-1899).

⁷⁹ N.A. Kaset 6.1/17 Chao Praya Surasakmontri asked for mining rights in Chantaburi.

⁸⁰ N.A. Mahatthai 5 16.2/83 Timbers in Sri Racha (July 20, 1905).

⁸¹ N.A. SB 2.33/6 The duplicated petition of Chao Praya Surasakmontri on the Sri Racha Company reported to Prince Damrong Rachanuphab (March 4, 1897- February 1927).

⁸² The Sri Racha Limited Company was taken over by the Privy Purse in 1932. The Bureau of the Royal Household took over the Sri Racha Limited Company in 1946 and changed its name to Sri Maharacha Limited Company. It was lockout in 1984.

⁸³ Rattasampant, "Field Marshal Chao Praya Surasakmontri," 145-148.

(Yam), Praya Rachawangsan (Chang), Pra Toralek (Khem), Sangwan Surasak, Ying Surasak, Yean Surasak and Doung Surasak.⁸⁴ Members of the Saeng-Xuto family became shareholders in hopes of increasing the family's wealth. Cherm invited Queen Saowapa to invest in the business because he had been presented by King Chulalongkorn as a loyal subordinate to her. He had previously gained the Queen's trust from his collection of rental fees for land owned by her.⁸⁵

Unfortunately, Cherm's business was not profitable. As he struggled to reverse the business's fortunes, he required Chao Praya Surasrivisitsak's, the Minister of Interior, permission to harvest teak in Tak province. However, correspondence failed. Afterwards, he composed a letter to Praya Mahayotha (Chang), begging him to inform King Vajiravudh about the issue. The statement read as follows:

I am very poor and have much debt. This worries me greatly. Praya Mahayotha knows that the investment in the forest business in Sri Racha is the only way I can sustain my own living. Nonetheless, the business is not lucrative now. I need to invest in an additional teak business to generate more income. I have sent a permission document to Praya Surasrivisitsak, with whom I am not familiar. So, I beg of you, my beloved brother, to inform His Majesty that I need permission to start a teak business in Tak. If His Majesty grants me permission, I will send a royal letter and map to him. If Praya Mahayotha has an opportunity to meet with His Majesty, please inform him of my request.⁸⁶

This letter documented Chao Praya Surasakmontri's attempt to employ the patron-client relationship in order to support his business in the modern bureaucracy. As Praya Mahayotha was a loyal subject of King Vajiravudh, Cherm expected the King to sympathize with him and his brother. However, King Vajiravudh upheld the decision of the Minister of Interior, who did not permit him to start a teak business in Tak. In 1926, Cherm's half-brothers also continued to request King Prajadhipok for the permission to harvest teak in Tak. A number of officials, including Praya Prachacheep, Praya Anutootwatee, and Praya Mahayotha, were discharged because the government budget faced a substantial deficit. The three of them wished to start a teak business in Mae Salit district and Mae Raka district in Tak.⁸⁷ However, the government declined their request favor of opening a state-run teak business.

Unfortunately, Cherm died in 1931. His company was in such severe debt that the Privy Purse seized control of the entire operation.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Rattasampant, "Field Marshal Chao Praya Surasakmontri," 145-148.

⁸⁵ Sawat Chantane, *Nithan Chao Rai*, (Bangkok: Kurusapa, 1966), 50-53.

⁸⁶ N.A.6 Bettalet 20 Chao Praya Surasakmontri wrote the private letter to Praya Mahayotha (April 21, 1961).

⁸⁷ N.A. Kaset 5.1/8 Praya Prachacheepboriban, Praya Anutootwatee and Praya Mahayotha (May 20-August 3, 1926).

⁸⁸ Rattasampant, "Field Marshal Chao Praya Surasakmontri," 158.

4. Conclusion

This study of the Saeng-Xuto family reveals new findings: the modern bureaucracy reformed not only the central administration into ministries, but also changed the recruitment of officials, which stipulated that the bureaucrats be educated or specialists in each ministry and belong to nobility. The members of the Saeng-Xuto family adapted themselves to be professionals working in each ministry. Klin was a cavalryman, Yam was an engineer in mineralogy, Chang was a naval officer, and Khem was a telegraph engineer. They all excelled as modern bureaucrats.

Although Siam was being transformed into a modern state, the patron-client relationship focusing on the loyalty of subordinates to their masters still played a prominent role in the modern bureaucracy in the Fifth and Sixth Reigns. The members of the Saeng-Xuto family had been the royal pages of kings and hence were loyal subjects who served King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh. Chao Praya Surasakmontri was promoted to the Minister of Agriculture due to his loyalty and seniority. Although the modern bureaucracy produced bureaucrats who ran the government at ministerial levels and worked within lines of authority, Praya Mahayotha (Chang) exemplified a nobleman who showed loyalty to King Vajiravudh by disregarding his commander's orders and trying to work directly with the King instead. This case caused internal conflict between ministers and officials. Meanwhile, King Vajiravudh remained attached to the patron-client relationship and promoted his loyal subjects to high-ranking positions. Chang's case provides a perfect example of this.

Noticeably, Chao Praya Surasakmontri (Cherm) embodied a Thai nobleman during the Reforms' Period who resorted to entrepreneurship after King Chulalongkorn reformed tax collection and abolished the control of manpower, causing a decline in the economic benefits of the nobility. The Sri Racha Limited Company afforded him an opportunity to thrive as an entrepreneur after his resignation. He attempted to utilize the patron-client relationship with the Kings and royal family to support his business.

The Saeng-Xuto family showed significant adaptability in the modern bureaucracy in the Fifth and Sixth Reigns and proved that the patron-client relationship, where subordinates were loyal to their masters, promoted the progression of bureaucrats and endured during Siam's transition into a modern state.

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